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The CIA Mystery Story

A special Presidential task force has been established to reduce overlapping and duplication in U. S. intelligence operations.

The elimination of duplication in such operations, the coordinating and consolidation of the flow of information to the President, was a major reason for the establishment of the CIA by Harry S. Truman. But while the CIA appears to be failing in this central job, it has assumed a great many other highly questionable roles.

For example, it has just disclosed a study by its Soviet analysts showing that Soviet economic growth rates have fallen sharply below those of the U. S.

It is reassuring to learn that the gap between the Soviet and American economies, instead of narrowing as Premier Khrushchev boasted it would, is increasing.

But is it the business of the CIA to publish such handiwork? That would seem to be a responsibility of the State or Commerce Depts. or the White House. Certainly the impact upon Asia, Africa and Latin America would have been far greater if the report had such sponsorship.

The challenge included in the CIA's assumption of roles never intended for it is much more serious than leaking an economic report. Former President Truman recently raised some grave, probing questions about the way the CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. He had never intended that it should get into policy-making or "peacetime cloak-and-dagger operations," he said. The way the CIA was functioning could even imperil our "free and open society," he warned.

These are somber words, as serious a warning to Americans as President Eisenhower's against the impact of the military-industrial complex on government policy.

Mr. Truman thinks it is time to take "another look" at the way the CIA is functioning. He is right. This review job should not be left—as the Presidential task force seems to propose—to the intelligence community itself.

This is a job for a blue-ribbon Congressional committee. Many legislators, including Rep. Lindsay (R-N.Y.), have urged such a Congressional review.